



# CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH

## COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

**“NEVER DOUBT THAT A SMALL GROUP OF THOUGHTFUL, COMMITTED CITIZENS CAN CHANGE THE WORLD; INDEED, IT IS THE ONLY THING THAT EVER HAS.” — MARGARET MEAD**

In the Preface of Civic Responsibility and Higher Education, an authoritative work edited by Thomas Ehrlich and published by Oryx Press in 2000, it is noted that “Civic engagement means working to make a difference in the civic life of our communities and developing the combination of knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community through both political and non-political processes.”

The GFWC Civic Engagement and Outreach Community Service Program reminds GFWC members that each of us is a part of a larger society and is responsible for undertaking actions that will create a better quality of life and foster a sense of community—locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.

Volunteering is one of the best ways to put civic duty into action and it is often the first step in building a stronger connection to community, but there are other ways to contribute, such as advocating, fundraising or donating, and problem solving. Locally, even supporting small businesses and keeping an eye on your neighbor can play a part in improving the community. The possibilities are endless.

In this Community Service Program, four “broad strokes” of Civic Engagement and Outreach are highlighted and encouraged, including: Citizenship; Crime Prevention, Safety, and Disaster Preparedness; the Needy, Hungry, and Homeless; and Our Military Personnel and Veterans. Beyond these suggestions, look within your own community and to the wider world for ways to make a positive impact.

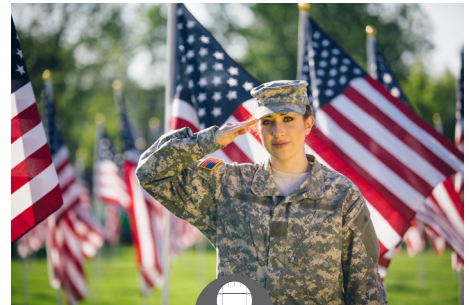


Direct any questions regarding projects that do not involve GFWC Affiliate Organizations to the Civic Engagement and Outreach Community Service Program Chairman or GFWC Programs Department at [Programs@GFWC.org](mailto:Programs@GFWC.org).



### 2020-2022 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND OUTREACH COMMUNITY SERVICE PROGRAM

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### CHALLENGE PROJECT: SUPPORT AND AID WOMEN VETERANS

Connect with women veterans to support health needs, reduce isolation and depression, and provide comfort and encouragement, with the assistance of a Women Veterans Program Manager at your VA Medical Center. Here are specific ideas provided by a WVP Manager:

- Donate comfort and useful items such as soothing lotions and bath gels, beauty products, cozy socks and slippers, adult inspirational coloring books and colored pencils (a great favorite!), games and playing cards, and/or gift cards to salons, coffee shops, and retail and grocery stores.

*(continued, top of page 2)*

- Supply beverages and snacks for the waiting area of the Veteran Women’s Health Clinic, with a small group of members hosting to provide camaraderie and new contacts.
- Collect new and slightly used jewelry and hold a club social for polishing and packaging the jewelry in decorated boxes or bags for distribution at the Veteran Women’s Health Clinic.
- Work with the Veterans Administration Medical Center to hold a games afternoon or painting social. Make new friends and have fun!
- Coordinate with the WVP Manager to help women veterans celebrate special moments in their lives, with gifts and thoughtful cards for new babies, family birthdays, and other meaningful occasions.



**FLAGS FOR FORT SMELLING**

GFWC Bloomington Woman’s Club (MN) members joined 5,000 volunteers at the Mall of America for “Flags for Fort Smelling.” Each member was given 25 flags and was shown the correct way to place a flag. Shuttles took volunteers to the cemetery. The club spent 48 hours on this project, which placed flags on all the graves at Fort Smelling for the first time in 35 years.



**SUPPORT TO DEPLOYED TROOPS**

The Exeter Area GFWC (NH) knitted and donated 290 hats and 20 scarves, and donated an additional 20 fleece scarves, to U.S. military personnel leaving our country through Pease Trade Port in Portsmouth, NH. Volunteer “Pease Greeters” welcome all military returning to the U.S. from overseas deployment and send off others with hugs, “God Bless,” and waving flags. The club also held a Christmas stocking workshop to decorate 90 stockings. All stockings were filled with personal care items, small toys, and other goodies, and were distributed by the Pease Greeters beginning in November. Getting together to decorate stockings was productive and fun, and a great social for members.





### **MAKEUP AND MAKEUP BAGS**

GFWC Las Noches Woman's Club (AZ) received a donation of make-up from St. Vincent DePaul that they distributed to five military bases across their state. Knowing there was a need for cosmetics among servicewomen, members sewed 400 make-up bags and donated more than 9,000 items, such as lipstick, mascara, and foundation for all skin colors. These gifts were much appreciated!



### **PROUDLY OUR COLORS WAVE**

GFWC Pembroke Woman's Club (NH) undertook and maintain a project, "Proudly Our Colors Wave," by posting flags in their community for all to see. The club purchased 50 United States flags, support poles, and finials, and made arrangements with the town manager, public works, and fire and police departments to secure the flags to telephone poles along the main thoroughfare, where they are displayed each year from Memorial Day to Labor Day.



### **SOUND THE ALARM TO SAVE A LIFE**

The GFWC Greensboro Woman's Club (NC) engaged a speaker from the Red Cross to address the club about educating the public on home fire safety. On Save a Life Day, club members went door-to-door in two at-risk neighborhoods with two fire fighters. The firemen installed free smoke alarms, checked existing alarms, and the clubwomen educated the homeowners on general fire safety, including creating a fire escape plan and alarm battery replacement.



### **HOLIDAY CHEER**

GFWC Fort Benton Woman's Club (MT) provided holiday cheer for children and needy families in their county. Members purchased clothing, filled holiday food baskets with grocery certificates, assembled and placed Angel gift tags on Christmas trees at local businesses, and picked up and distributed the gifts along with the Christmas baskets. They advertised in newspapers and on Facebook, and displayed posters throughout the county.



**PROJECT IDEAS**

Be inspired by this list of ideas of how GFWC clubs can support the Civic Engagement and Outreach Community Service Program. Find further information about organizations named here under Resources.

**CITIZENSHIP**

- Work together with other community members or organizations to create a social media platform, such as a Pinterest board, or Facebook or Twitter page, to engage the larger community on key issues, identify positive solutions, and stimulate public policy initiatives.
- Honor and celebrate patriotic holidays by hosting or volunteering for events commemorating Presidents' Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Veterans Day, Constitution Day, and others. Consider purchasing or printing copies of the United States Constitution for distribution. One organization that provides copies at bulk rate is Freedom Factor.
- Advocate for civics education in schools, ensuring students acquire an understanding of government.
- Work together to "Get Out the Vote!" Encourage others to register and vote, provide information about early voting or polling locations and times, and offer transportation if needed.
- Provide information on correctly folding a United States flag, plus the meaning and symbolism in the flag folding ceremony, to scouts, school groups, and others. The American Legion offers clear and concise instructions.
- Help an individual or a small group study for the U.S. Citizenship test.
- Collaborate with bookstores or libraries to create a prominent display of nonfiction books that commemorate Women's History Month in March, tell the "herstory" of women's suffrage, and celebrate the centennial of the 19th Amendment on August 26, 2020.
- Collect books that celebrate women of the suffrage movement or other women and girls of historic or societal importance, including biographies, nonfiction, and historic fiction, and donate them to local schools, libraries, and programs such as the Boys and Girls Club, YWCA, and Girls, Inc.
- Visit state monuments, notable homes, and other historic sites, perhaps as part of a State or Region meeting. Collect a donation or hold a fundraiser to help support the site or its mission.
- Create a play, puppet show, or exhibit to teach young students about "Symbols of the United States," including the US flag, Uncle Sam, the Liberty Bell, the bald eagle, the Statue of Liberty, and others.
- Sponsor a Candidates Forum for town officials and/or state representatives, with club members serving as hosts and moderators. Invite media to cover the event.
- Join the Chamber of Commerce to increase brand recognition through networking and publicity. Use Chamber publications and calendars to help spread the word about club events.
- Invite a speaker from the League of Women Voters to provide information on voting rights and how to increase participation and educate voters.
- Pair up with another club member and sign up to volunteer at the polls.

**CRIME PREVENTION, SAFETY, AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS**

- Prevent crime and make homes and communities safer by providing information on crime prevention strategies, such as neighborhood/park watches and suspicious activity reports.
- Support and thank local Police and Fire Departments for keeping the community safe. Consider making gift bags that include snacks, beverages, gift certificates, other small treats or necessities, and a handwritten thank you note. Or, provide a monthly meal and/or dessert to these first responders, with groups of club members working together.
- Spread the word about the danger of carbon monoxide poisoning in the home by providing information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, including the signs and causes of poisoning, and how to prevent it. Collaborate with a local merchant to purchase carbon monoxide alarms at cost and then provide them to the elderly and/or needy.
- Sponsor CPR or first aid classes for moms' groups, childcare providers, teens, and others.
- Alert parents and caregivers to the hazard of furniture tip-overs that endanger the lives of children, the disabled, and the elderly. According to the Consumer Product Safety Commission, someone in the U.S. is injured every 17 minutes by a furniture, TV, or appliance tip over. Create awareness through social media on how to anchor furniture or offer facts and free furniture anchors at a community-wide event.





- Warn club members and others by sharing information on Identity Theft from USA.gov, including potential victims, types of theft, warning signs, and prevention.
- Go to the National Council on Aging for information about scams against seniors that target grieving spouses, worried grandparents, and those with medical concerns. Share fact sheets with members and friends, including “The Top Ten Financial Scams Targeting Seniors,” and “Eight Tips for How Seniors Can Protect Themselves from Money Scams.”
- Hold a bicycle safety workshop for children during National Bicycle Safety Month in May.
- Utilize materials from the National Safety Council and other experts to educate teen drivers about the dangers of distracted driving during Distracted Driving Awareness Month in April.
- Work with first responders and your local high schools to provide motivational presentations on at-risk driving practices, such as texting and failure to use seat belts.
- Learn to stop traumatic injury bleeding, which is the leading cause of preventable death in a severely injured person. Find tools through the national awareness and training campaign, Stop the Bleed, directed by the American College of Surgeons. Sponsor a course for club and community members that offers hands-on practice to apply direct pressure, pack a wound, and use a tourniquet.
- Plan a club or community program with first responders in September, National Preparedness Month, on possible emergency situations, natural disasters, and how to be ready at home.
- Provide information to community members on how to make a Disaster Preparedness Toolkit.
- Create and provide Disaster Preparedness Toolkits to first responders that can be distributed throughout the community in a time of need.
- Coordinate efforts to provide disaster victims with monetary or in-kind donations.
- Create a pamphlet of local emergency response numbers and other important crisis information for distribution in the community.

### **THE NEEDY, HUNGRY, AND HOMELESS**

- Consult your local welfare office, shelters, churches, and other community-assistance organizations to determine community needs and help provide provisions for the needy.
- Assist Habitat for Humanity by providing volunteer labor or donations such as furniture and household goods. Consider making or providing meals and/or snacks for volunteers.
- Put together a Women Build team for Habitat for Humanity and work in tandem with construction professionals and future homeowners.
- Organize a club day of service at a local food pantry by donating essential goods and sorting and organizing their shelves. Offer a few surprises, such as “Birthday Bags” filled with cake mix, a can of icing, candles, a baking pan, and a birthday card.
- Place a strong emphasis on childhood hunger and work with or establish local programs that provide weekend and summertime meals for needy children. Consider offering family nutrition tips that help parents shop for and cook healthy, affordable meals.
- Organize a winter clothing drive in the fall, collecting, sorting, and cleaning gently used coats, jackets, sweaters, hats, scarves, and gloves. Partner with a school, church, or another local agency to distribute the clothing.
- Work with your local schools to establish “closets” within the schools where clothing, shoes, backpacks, underwear, socks, outerwear, and personal hygiene items are organized and stored for distribution to children in need.
- See if there is an affiliate of Family Promise or another shelter for homeless families in your area. Investigate their needs and determine if there is a project that is right for your club.
- Collect socks at club, District, or State meetings and donate this “number one most requested item” to homeless shelters.
- Hold a collection drive for I Support the Girls, an organization that provides bras, underwear, sanitary napkins, and tampons to women and girls in need. Donate the items to the closest I Support the Girls affiliate location or a similar local nonprofit organization, so they can be distributed in your area.
- Learn about Days for Girls, an organization that provides access to menstrual care and education for girls around the world. Fundraise for a monetary donation or create sustainable menstrual care kits that provide safe, beautiful, washable, and long-lasting sanitary protection.
- Advocate for “Housing not Handcuffs,” a campaign of the National Coalition for the Homeless that aims to put an end to homelessness and the criminalization of the homeless.



**OUR MILITARY PERSONNEL AND VETERANS**

**“Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifice.” — Harry Truman**

- Encourage members to research local or national programs that support our military. The United States Department of Veterans Affairs can direct you to assistance programs for those currently deployed, military families, and/or veterans. If your club wants to work specifically with women veterans, contact the Women Veterans Program Manager at your VA Medical Center.
- Support active military personnel with programs through the USO, such as Wishbook, to provide gifts of comfort food packages, phone calls home, and long distance bedtime stories, or USO2GO Kits, which provide snacks, toiletries, and fun diversions (music and games) to troops deployed to remote areas.
- Keep military loved ones together during medical treatment by supporting the Fisher House Foundation, which builds comfort homes at military installations and VA Medical Centers around the world. Clubs can also support the Foundation’s Hero Miles program, which uses donated airline miles to bring family members to the hospital bedsides of the injured, and Hotels for Heroes, which uses donated hotel points, and/or its grant program and scholarship fund.
- Create awareness about the three primary mental health concerns of military personnel and veterans: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Depression, and Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Support organizations such as the National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI) and others that provide help.
- Create awareness about the high rate of suicide among veterans and suicide prevention programs such as the Veterans Crisis Line and S.A.V.E., a VA online training program that teaches simple preventive steps (Signs, Ask, Validate, Encourage, Expedite) that anyone can follow with those at risk.
- Consult the Suicide Prevention Coordinator at your VA Medical Center to determine what help and support your club can provide. Consider a program specifically for women veterans, who have a suicide rate that is twice that of non-veterans. If women veterans have suffered sexual trauma, they may require personal rather than VA transportation, which can be provided with pre-paid UBER or credit cards.
- Contact local homeless shelters to ask if any current residents are veterans. If so, work with the shelter administrator to determine what additional support or resources may help these veterans become more self-sufficient.
- Donate clothing, nonperishable food items, backpacks, and other items to Stand Downs, VA events that provide necessities, health screenings, and referrals for homeless veterans.
- Work with your VA to identify veterans who need household supplies and furniture, employment assistance, educational scholarships, or other help. Consider establishing an ongoing relationship with one or more veterans.
- Contribute to Wreaths Across America by sponsoring wreaths or volunteering at Veteran Cemeteries to place or remove wreaths.
- Contribute to the Honor Flight Network by donating, volunteering as a “Guardian” to accompany an honoree, and/or being part of a “Welcome Home” congregation.
- Support the Quilts of Valor Foundation by donating fabric, quilt squares, or quilts, or by making monetary contributions or becoming a sponsor.



## CONNECT WITH GFWC AFFILIATE ORGANIZATIONS

### HEIFER INTERNATIONAL

- Support Heifer by sponsoring a Community Animal Health Workers Kit. This kit includes tools such as thermometers, stethoscopes, hoof trimmers, gloves, disinfectants, medicine for animals, and more. It also trains participants in properly caring for gift animals ([www.heifer.org/gift-catalog/animals/community-animal-health-worker-kit.html](http://www.heifer.org/gift-catalog/animals/community-animal-health-worker-kit.html)).
- Inspire students to become global citizens through Heifer's free educational and fundraising programs catered to any age group ([www.heifer.org/what-you-can-do/get-involved/schools/index.html](http://www.heifer.org/what-you-can-do/get-involved/schools/index.html)).

### HOBY

- Help schools select and register Sophomore students for the State Leadership Seminars ([www.hoby.org/programs/state-leadership-seminars](http://www.hoby.org/programs/state-leadership-seminars)).
- Select and sponsor a deserving high school Junior or Senior for the Advanced Leadership Academy.
- Invest and empower your community students by sponsoring them to attend the HOBY World Leadership Congress (WLC). This four-day seminar broadens their perspective as part of a global community we share ([www.hoby.org/programs/world-leadership-congress](http://www.hoby.org/programs/world-leadership-congress)).
- Volunteer at the HOBY Leadership events in your area ([www.hoby.org/volunteer](http://www.hoby.org/volunteer)).

### MARCH OF DIMES

- Use the March of Dimes Advocacy Toolkit to make your voice heard by contacting Members of Congress about how you feel about Maternal Health, Access to Care, and Newborn Screening ([www.marchofdimes.org/materials/Advocacy-toolkit-q3-2019-v2.pdf](http://www.marchofdimes.org/materials/Advocacy-toolkit-q3-2019-v2.pdf)).



**OPERATION SMILE**

- Coordinate with members, friends, and family to sew, collect, or prepare specific supplies that are needed for medical missions ([www.operationsmile.org/content/community-fundraising-and-service-projects](http://www.operationsmile.org/content/community-fundraising-and-service-projects)).
- Sew Smile Splint arm bands to prevent a child from bending their arms and touching their face. An arm band is inserted with tongue depressors to create a simple splint. To request a copy of this pattern, or if you have any questions, please contact Operation Smile at [communityrelations@operationsmile.org](mailto:communityrelations@operationsmile.org), or 1-888-677-6453.

**PCAA**

- Support and advocate for family-friendly policies and advocate on behalf of vulnerable children and families.
- Learn more about child abuse and neglect prevention and become a messenger for the cause. Lending your voice to bring about change by advocating for policies that help children, families, and the communities in which they live.
- Join Prevent Child Abuse America social media networks to keep up to date on Prevent Child Abuse America news.
- Purchase or stream for club viewing the new documentary, **Resilience**, a film that reveals how toxic stress can trigger hormones that wreak havoc on the brains and bodies of children, putting them at greater risk for disease, homelessness, prison time, and early death (<https://preventchildabuse.org/resource/resilience>).

**ST. JUDE**

- Volunteer at a St. Jude Walk/Run to End Childhood Cancer event near you by visiting [www.stjude.org/walkrun](http://www.stjude.org/walkrun) and click on "volunteer."
- Join us on social media @StJude and use the Hashtag #ShowYourGold to show your support.

**UNITED NATIONS FOUNDATION SHOT@LIFE CAMPAIGN**

- Encourage club members to apply for the annual Shot@Life Summit. Learn how to advocate and put it into practice in support of funding global vaccines (<https://shotatlife.org/championsummit>).
- Utilize the Race to Erase Toolkit when meeting with state legislators. Together we can make sure that legislators know their constituents support global vaccination efforts (<https://shotatlife.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Race-to-Erase-2018-Toolkit.pdf>).

**UNICEF USA**

- Promote Equality for Girls Program by promoting education for girls so that they can become the artists, engineers, and advisors of tomorrow ([www.unicefusa.org/mission/equality-girls](http://www.unicefusa.org/mission/equality-girls)).
- Visit UNICEF's USA Action Center: Advocate to Put Children First. Enter your zip code to see the campaigns currently being promoted in your area ([https://act.unicefusa.org/?\\_ga=2.56491243.1930969479.1592003084-1296862387.1592003084](https://act.unicefusa.org/?_ga=2.56491243.1930969479.1592003084-1296862387.1592003084)).
- Create "STOP Sign" stickers to place in rest area bathrooms of highly travel roads in your community. Add the phone number of the national hotline for survivors of human trafficking.





**GFWC RESOURCES****American Legion** [www.legion.org](http://www.legion.org)

For specific information on flag folding, go to [www.legion.org/flag/folding](http://www.legion.org/flag/folding).

**Consumer Product Safety Commission** [www.consumerreports.org](http://www.consumerreports.org)

For specific information on anchoring furniture go to [www.consumerreports.org/furniture/how-to-anchor-furniture-to-help-prevent-tip-overs](http://www.consumerreports.org/furniture/how-to-anchor-furniture-to-help-prevent-tip-overs)

**Days for Girls** [www.daysforgirls.org](http://www.daysforgirls.org)

**Family Promise** [www.familypromise.org](http://www.familypromise.org) affiliates work in 43 states as a leading nonprofit addressing the issue of family homelessness. The organization is 501c3 with a 4 Star Charity navigator standing. Blankets, pillows, towels and washcloths, school snacks, and meals are appreciated donations.

**Fisher House Foundation** [www.fisherhouse.org](http://www.fisherhouse.org)**Freedom Factor** [www.freedomfactor.org](http://www.freedomfactor.org)

For specific information on the cost of copies of the United States Constitution and the Declaration of Independence go to ([www.freedomfactor.org/collections/designer-pocket-constitutions/products/pocket-constitution-independence-hall](http://www.freedomfactor.org/collections/designer-pocket-constitutions/products/pocket-constitution-independence-hall))

**Habitat for Humanity** [www.habitat.org](http://www.habitat.org)**Honor Flight Network** [www.honorflight.org](http://www.honorflight.org)**I Support the Girls** [www.isupportthegirls.org](http://www.isupportthegirls.org)**League of Women Voters** [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

The League of Women Voters encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

**National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

For specific information on supporting military personal and veterans go to [www.nami.org/Find-Support/Veterans-and-Active-Duty](http://www.nami.org/Find-Support/Veterans-and-Active-Duty).

**National Council on Ageing** [www.ncoa.org](http://www.ncoa.org)

For specific information on scams against seniors go to [www.ncoa.org/economic-security/money-management/scams-security](http://www.ncoa.org/economic-security/money-management/scams-security).

**National Safety Council** [www.nsc.org](http://www.nsc.org)

For specific information on distracted driving go to [www.nsc.org/road-safety/safety-topics/distracted-driving](http://www.nsc.org/road-safety/safety-topics/distracted-driving).

**National Women Veterans United** [www.nwvu.org](http://www.nwvu.org)**National Coalition for the Homeless** [www.nationalhomeless.org](http://www.nationalhomeless.org)

For specific information on "Housing not Handcuffs" go to [www.housingnothandcuffs.org](http://www.housingnothandcuffs.org).

**National Crime Prevention Council** [www.ncpc.org](http://www.ncpc.org)**Quilts of Valor Foundation** [www.qovf.org](http://www.qovf.org)

For specific information about making quilts go to [www.govf.org/make-a-gov](http://www.govf.org/make-a-gov).

**Stop the Bleed** [www.stopthebleed.org](http://www.stopthebleed.org)

**USA GOV** [www.usa.gov](http://www.usa.gov)

For specific information on identify theft go to [www.usa.gov/identity-theft](http://www.usa.gov/identity-theft).

**U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs** [www.va.gov](http://www.va.gov)

For specific information on Stand Downs go to [www.va.gov/homeless/events.asp](http://www.va.gov/homeless/events.asp).

**USO** [www.uso.org](http://www.uso.org)

For specific information on Wishbook go to [www.usowishbook.uso.org](http://www.usowishbook.uso.org).

**Wreaths Across America** [www.wreathscrossamerica.org](http://www.wreathscrossamerica.org)

## AWARDS

GFWC recognizes State Federations for outstanding projects and clubs for creative projects in implementing effective Civic Engagement and Outreach Community Service Program projects and partnership projects as follows:

- Certificate to one State Federation in each membership category
- \$50 award to one club in the nation for project creativity

Award winners will be determined by entries into the Award Program. Each State Federation may submit one State Award Entry and one Club Creativity Award Entry for the Civic Engagement and Outreach Community Service Program projects. Clubs do not submit entries directly to GFWC.



Refer to the Awards section of the *Club Manual* for more information, including the Award Entry Cover Sheet guidelines.

## RESOLUTIONS

**Currently Under Review**

